REMARKS

This Response responds to the Office Action dated November 16, 2006 in which the Examiner objected to claim 5, stated that claims 5, 9-11, 13 and 15 are allowed and rejected claims 1-4, 6, 8, 12 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner acknowledge the Information Disclosure Statement filed August 20, 2001. Applicant notes that a copy of the Information Disclosure Statement was returned with the November 17, 2004 Office Action (Paper No. 10132004). However, although the Examiner signed the 1449, the Examiner did not initial the two documents cited thereon. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner initial the two references cited on the 1449.

Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner objection to claim 5 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicant respectfully points out that claim 5 has been rewritten into independent form. Therefore, claim 5 is allowed since it does not depend from a rejected base claim.

Claim 1 claims an equipment management apparatus, claim 12 claims an equipment management system and claim 14 claims an equipment management method. The equipment management apparatus, system and method transmit management information collected from a plurality of equipment (i.e., image forming apparatuses) to a centralized management apparatus. The equipment management apparatus and method include a detector and a transmission controller. The detector is for detecting a trouble which has occurred in first equipment (i.e., first image forming apparatus). The transmission controller is for, when the trouble is detected by the detector, transmitting management information about second

equipment (i.e., second image forming apparatus) which is other than the first equipment together with the trouble information about the first equipment to the centralized management apparatus. The first and second equipment are an image forming apparatuses for forming an image on a sheet.

Through the structure and method of the claimed invention collecting information from a plurality of image forming apparatuses and transmitting management information about second image forming apparatuses together with the trouble information about the first image forming apparatus to a centralized management apparatus as claimed in claims 1, 12 and 14, the claimed invention provides an equipment management apparatus, system and method in which a management center can recognize the conditions of the image forming apparatuses in which no abnormality has been detected as well as apparatuses in which problems have occurred so that a service engineer dispatched to deal with a machine having a problem can also do preventive maintenance on apparatuses which will need maintenance in the future. The prior art does not show, teach or suggest the invention as claimed in claims 1, 12 and 14.

Claims 1-4, 6, 8, 12 and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over *Kageyama* (U.S. Publication 2002/0018681).

Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103. The claims have been reviewed in light of the Office Action, and for reasons which will be set forth below, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner withdraws the rejection to the claims and allows the claims to issue.

Kageyama appears to disclose [0032] the overall construction of the printing system is described, referring to FIG. 1. [0033] The printing system is composed of

a first network 110, a second network 120, a first computer 300, and a printer 200 connected to the first network 110, and a second computer 400 connected to the second network 120. [0037] The printer 200 has a printer controller 2100 and a printer engine 2200, and the printer controller has an individual printer management part 2120 and an individual printer information DB part 2121 in order to manage the printer. [0078] Initially, the printer engine 2200 detects the occurrence of trouble. Examples of the troubles considered are shortage of consumable articles, such as paper, toner, and so on, a paper jam, an open door, a loss of printer power, a failure in the fixing unit, a failure in the optical system, a failure in the printing system, and so on. [0079] The printer controller 2120 receives information on the occurrence of trouble in the printer engine 2200 and the contents thereof (process 701). [0080] Then, the first computer 300 receives information on the occurrence of trouble in the printer engine 2200 and the identification of the trouble from the printer controller 2100 (process 702). [0081] Then, the first computer 300 issues an inquiry to the printer controller 2100 as to a method of coping with the trouble (process 703). The inquiry is issued using the user interface of the first computer 300 when the first computer 300 is informed of the occurrence of the trouble. [0082] After that, the printer controller 2100 transmits the contents of the inquiry to the second computer 400 (process 706). [0083] Next, the total printer management service processing part 4120 of the second computer 400 obtains a reply to the inquiry by retrieving and referring to the contents of the total printer management information DB part 4130 (process 705). Then, the total printer management service processing part 4120 transmits the reply to the printer controller 2100 in the printer 200 (process 704). [0084] Then, the printer controller 2100 forwards the received reply to the first

computer 300 (process 707). The first computer 300 displays the reply on a screen using the user interface to show the reply to the inquiry to the user which has issued the inquiry. [0088] The printer engine 2200 monitors and stores the status of consumable articles used in printing while performing printing processing. [0089] The printer controller 2100 receives a signal indicating the status of consumable articles in the printer engine, and stores the status of consumable articles in the individual printer information DB part (process 801). [0090] Then, based on the contents of the individual printer information DB part 2121 in the printer controller 2100, the first computer 300 receives information indicating a shortage of consumable articles in the printer engine 2200 from the printer controller 2100 (process 802). [0091] Then, the first computer 300 places an order for the consumable articles which are in short supply to the printer controller 2100 (process 803). The order is placed using the user interface of the first computer 300 when the first computer 300 is informed of the shortage of the consumable articles.

Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's characterization of *Kageyama*. *Kageyama* merely discloses a printer 200 composed of a printer controller 2100 and a printer engine 2200 [0066]. Nothing in *Kageyama* shows, teaches or suggests first and second image forming apparatuses for forming an image on a sheet as claimed in claims 1, 12 and 14. Rather, *Kageyama* merely discloses a single printer 200 (i.e., a single image forming apparatus). Applicants respectfully submit that printer controller 2100 is <u>not</u> an image forming apparatus for forming an image on a sheet. Rather, printer controller 2100 of *Kageyama* is composed of MPU bus 601, an I/F part 602, an MPU 603, a ROM memory 604, a secondary memory unit 605, a user operating panel 607, a sub-MPU 606, a printer memory controller 609 and a RAM

memory 60A [0066]. Thus, nothing in *Kageyama* shows, teaches or suggests that the printer controller 2100 can form an image on a sheet as claimed in claims 1, 12 and 14.

Additionally, *Kageyama* merely discloses a printer engine 2200 which monitors and stores the status of consumable articles [0088] and a printer controller 2100 which receives a signal indicating the status of consumable articles in the printer engine 2200 and stores the status of the consumable articles in the individual printer information DB part (processor 801) [0089]. Thus nothing in *Kageyama* shows, teaches or suggests that the individual printer information part stores management information about a second image forming apparatus as claimed in claims 1, 12 and 14. Rather, the information stored in the printer controller 2100 in *Kageyama* is information about consumable articles in the printer engine (i.e. management information about the printer engine 2200 and not management information about the printer controller 2100).

Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's statement that transmitting management information about second equipment would have been an obvious modification. First, *Kageyama* does not show, teach or suggest storing management information about the printer controller 2100. Rather, the printer controller only stores the status of consumable articles from the printer engine 2200. Furthermore, since the printer controller 2100 has no consumable articles, there is nothing in *Kageyama* that shows, teaches or suggests storing any management information about the printer controller 2100. In other words, Applicants respectfully submit that it would not be obvious to transmit management information about the printer controller 2100 when the printer controller has not consumable articles. In fact, as

discussed above, printer controller 2100 is not an image forming apparatus which forms an image on a sheet. Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's characterization of *Kageyama* that printer controller 2100 and printer 2200 are analogous to first and second image forming apparatuses forming an image on a sheet. Applicant respectfully points out that printer engine 2200 and printer controller 2100 are both part of the same printer (image forming apparatus) 300.

Since nothing in *Kageyama* shows, teaches or suggests a) a plurality of image forming apparatuses forming images on a sheet, b) transmitting management information together with trouble information as claimed in claims 1, 12 and 14, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner withdraws the rejection to claims 1, 12 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §103.

Claims 2-4, 6, 8 depend from claim 1 and recite additional features. Applicant respectfully submits that claims 2-4, 6 and 8 would not have been obvious within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §103 over *Kageyama* at least for the reasons as set forth above. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner withdraws the rejection to claims 2-4, 6 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §103.

Thus it now appears that the application is in condition for reconsideration and allowance. Reconsideration and allowance at an early date are respectfully requested.

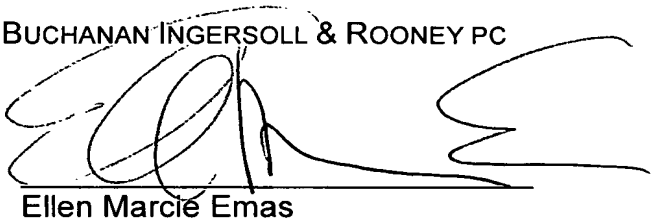
If for any reason the Examiner feels that the application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact, by telephone, the applicant's undersigned attorney at the indicated telephone number to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

In the event that this paper is not timely filed within the currently set shortened statutory period, applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such extension of time may be charged to our Deposit Account No. 02-4800.

In the event that any additional fees are due with this paper, please charge our Deposit Account No. 02-4800.

Respectfully submitted,

BUCHANAN INGERSOLL & ROONEY PC

Date: February 15, 2007 By: 

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